

SUPPORT – AB458

Date: April 2, 2019
To: Assembly Committee on Taxation
Re: NSEA Support for AB458

The Nevada State Education Association represents teachers and education support professionals across the state. We believe every Nevada student deserves a high-quality public education.

NSEA has been a consistent advocate for adequate public education funding and for keeping public funds in public schools. We support AB458 to eliminate the automatic 10% annual increase to total amount of tax credits allowed for the “Opportunity Scholarships”.

Every dollar allowed in a tax credit going to “Opportunity Scholarships” is a dollar that the legislature could program in our underfunded public schools, where 90% of Nevada kids receive their education.

In February, hundreds of educators from across Nevada rallied under the banner of Red for Ed to draw attention to chronic underfunding of public education. Despite recent efforts, Nevada continues to rank near the bottom of states in most metrics. In the 2018 Quality Counts report from Education Week, Nevada ranked 47th in per-pupil funding and dead last in both class size and overall education quality.

Nevada needs to do better.

“Opportunity Scholarships” are really just back-door school vouchers. Instead of diverting funding to programs that pay for a limited number of students to go to private schools, Nevada has the responsibility to allocate sufficient funds to public schools, which are accessible to every Nevada student. Over the last 3 years, not including the one-time expansion of the program last session, appropriations for “Opportunity Scholarships” have increased by more than 33%, while over the same period, per-pupil base funding for K-12 education has only increased by a little more than 4%. This is significantly less than the increased cost of doing business, which is a major reason we saw draconian budget cuts in school districts across the state immediately after last legislative session.

Public money should be invested in public schools.